

## ADVENTURE

By  
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## CHAPTER XVI.

"PLEASE DON'T BE ANGRY WITH ME,"  
SHELDON said to the white man.  
"AFTER DR. WELSHIRE AND THE  
Apostle departed and Captain  
Oleson had turned in for a  
sleep in a veranda hammock  
Sheldon opened Joan's letter:

"Dear Mr. Sheldon—Please forgive me for  
stealing the Flibberty Gibbet. I simply  
had to. The Martha means everything to  
us. Think of it, only \$250 for her, \$250  
if I don't have her. I know I shall be able  
to pay all expenses out of her gear, which  
the natives will not have carried off. And  
if I do save her it is the gear of a life-  
line. And if I don't save her I'll fill the  
Emily and the Flibberty Gibbet with re-  
cruits. Recruits are needed right now on  
Beranda more than anything else.

And please, please don't be angry with  
me. You said I shouldn't go recruiting on  
the Flibberty, and I won't. I'll go on the  
Emily.

I bought two cows this afternoon. That  
trader at Nogi died of fever, and I bought  
them from his partner—Sam Willis. His  
name—Joan agrees to deliver them, most  
likely by the Minerva next time she is  
down that way. Beranda has been long  
enough on thin milk.

And Mr. Welshmore has agreed to get  
me some oranges and lime trees from the  
mission station at Ulava. He will deliver  
them the next trip of the Apostle. If the  
Sydney steamer arrives before I get back  
plant the sweet coral she will bring be-  
tween the young trees on the high bank  
of the Bateana. The current is eating in  
against that bank, and you should do  
something to save it.

I have ordered some fig trees and lo-  
quats, too, from Sydney. Dr. Welshmore  
will bring some mango seeds. They are  
big trees and require plenty of room.  
The Martha is registered 10 tons. She is  
the largest schooner in the Solomons  
and the best. I saw a little of her lines  
and guess the rest. She will sail like a  
witch. If she hasn't filled with water her  
engine will be all right. The reason she  
went ashore was because it was not  
working. The engineer had disconnected  
the feed pipes to clean out the rust. Poor  
business unless at anchor or with plenty  
of sea room.

Plant all the trees in the compound even  
if you have to clean out the palms later  
on.

And don't plant the sweet coral all at  
once. Let a few days elapse between  
plantings.

JOAN LACKLAND.

He dug the letter, lingering over  
it and scrutinizing the writing in a  
way that was not his wont. How  
characteristic, was his thought, as he  
studied the boyish scrawl—clear to  
read, painfully clear, but none the less  
boyish.

He looked long at the name, Joan  
Lackland—just an assemblage of let-  
ters, of commonplace letters, but an  
assemblage that generated a subtle  
heady magic. It crept into his brain  
and twined and twisted his mental  
processes until all that constituted him  
at that moment went out in love to  
that scrawled signature, Joan Lack-  
land. Each time he looked at it there  
arose visions of her in a myriad moods  
and guises, coming in out of the flying  
smother of the gale that had wrecked  
her schooner, launching a whaleboat to  
go a-fishing, running dripping from  
the sea with streaming hair and cling-  
ing garments to the fresh water show-  
er, frightening fourscore cannibals  
with an empty chloroform bottle, ju-  
venily rattling on about romance  
and venture, bright eyed, her face  
flushed and eager with enthusiasm.  
Joan Lackland! He mused over the  
cryptic wonder of it all the secrets of  
love were made clear and he felt a  
keen sympathy for lovers who wrote them  
on the beach sands of the sea.

Then he came back to reality, and  
his face hardened. Even then she  
was on the wild coast of Malaita and  
at Poonga-Poonga, of all villainous  
and dangerous portions the worst, peo-  
pled with a teeming population of  
head hunters, robbers and murderers.  
For the instant he entertained the rash  
thought of calling his boat's crew and  
starting immediately in a whaleboat  
for Poonga-Poonga. But the next in-  
stant the idea was dismissed. What  
could he do if he did go? First she  
would resent it. Next she would laugh  
at him and call him a silly.

There was much in her willful con-  
duct that caused him to wince in the  
heart of him. He was appalled by  
the thought of her shoulder to shoul-  
der with the drunken rabble of trad-  
ers and beach combers at Guvutu.  
It was bad enough for a clean, fastidious  
man, but for a young woman, a girl at  
that, it was awful. The theft of the  
Flibberty Gibbet was merely amusing,  
though the means by which the theft  
had been effected gave him hurt. Yet  
he found consolation in the fact that  
the task of making Oleson drunk had  
been turned over to the three scoun-  
drels. And next and swiftly came the  
vision of her, alone with those same  
three scoundrels, on the Emily, sailing  
out to sea from Guvutu in the twilight  
with darkness coming on. Then came  
visions of Adam Adam and Noa Noa  
and all her brawny Tahitian following,  
and his anxiety faded away, being re-  
placed by irritation that she should  
have been capable of such wildness of  
conduct. And the irritation was still  
on him as he got up and went inside  
to stare at the stool on the wall and to  
wish that her Stetson hat and revolver  
belt were hanging from it.

Several quiet weeks slipped by.  
The steamer from Sydney, the Kam-  
amaba, broke the quietude of the

range for an hour while landing mail,  
supplies and the trees and seeds Joan  
had ordered. The Minerva, bound for  
Cape Marsh, brought the two cows  
from Nogi. And the Apostle, hurrying  
back to Tulagi to connect with the  
Sydney steamer, sent a boat ashore  
with the oranges and lime trees from  
Ulava. And these several weeks mark-  
ed a period of perfect weather.

Then came the long expected north-  
wester. For eight days it raged, lull-  
ing at times to short durations of calm,  
then shifting a point or two and rang-  
ing with renewed violence.

It was in the good weather that fol-  
lowed one of the house boys ran him  
down with the news that the Martha,  
the Flibberty Gibbet and the Emily  
were heading in for the anchorage.

Coming into the compound from the  
rear, Sheldon saw everything at once—  
first, a glimpse at the sea, where the  
Martha floated huge alongside the cut-  
ter and the ketch which had rescued  
her; and next, the ground in front of  
the veranda steps, where a great  
crowd of fresh caught cannibals stood  
at attention. From the fact that each  
was attired in a new, snow white lava-  
lava, Sheldon knew that they were  
recruits. Part way up the steps one of  
them was just lacking down into the  
crowd, while another, called out by  
name, was coming up. It was Joan's  
voice that had called him, and Sheldon  
reined in his horse and watched.

She sat at the head of the steps, be-  
hind a table, between Munster and his  
white mate, the three of them check-  
ing long lists, Joan asking the ques-  
tions and writing the answers in the  
big, red covered, Beranda labor jour-  
nal.

"What name?" she demanded of the  
black man on the steps.  
"Tagari," came the answer, accom-  
panied by a grin and a rolling of cur-  
ious eyes.

Sheldon watched her to the foot of  
the steps, where she turned and called  
back:  
"My, I can't tell you how good it is  
to be home again!"

"And Burnett said, 'Well, I'll be  
damned! I beg your pardon, Miss Lack-  
land, but you have wantonly broken  
the recruiting laws and you know it.'"  
Captain Munster narrated as they sat  
over their whisky, waiting for Joan to  
come back. "And she says she to him,  
'Mr. Burnett, can you show me any  
law against taking the passengers off a  
vessel that's on a reef? What could  
Burnett do? He passed the whole  
unlawful and fifty, though the Emily  
was only licensed for forty and the  
Flibberty Gibbet for thirty-five.'"

"But I don't understand," Sheldon  
said.

"This is the way she worked it.  
When the Martha was floated we had  
to beach her right away at the head  
of the bay, and whilst repairs were  
going on, a new rudder being made,  
sails bent, gear recovered from the  
niggers, and so forth, Miss Lackland  
horrors Sparrowhawk to run the Flib-  
berty along with Curtis, lends me  
Brahm's to take Sparrowhawk's place  
and starts both craft off recruiting.  
My word, the niggers came easy. It  
was virgin ground. Since the Scot-  
tish Chiefs no recruiter had ever been  
tried to work the coast. When we  
fired up we came back to see how the  
Martha was progressing."

"And thinking we was going home  
with our recruits," Sparrowhawk slip-  
ped in. "Lord lumme, that Miss Lack-  
land ain't never satisfied. 'I'll take  
'em on the Martha,' she says, 'and you  
can go back and fill up again.'"

"But I told her it couldn't be done,"  
Munster went on. "I told her the  
Martha hadn't a license for recruiting.  
'Oh,' she said, 'it can't be done, eh?'  
and she stood and thought a few min-  
utes."

"And I'd seen her think before,"  
cried Sparrowhawk, "and I knew at  
winst that the thing was as good as  
done."

Munster lit his cigarette and re-  
sumed:  
"You see that spit," she says to me,  
'with the little ripple breaking around  
it? There's a current sets right across  
it and on it, and it will set you nicely  
around. They'll rescue your re-  
cruits and sail away—simple, ain't it?'  
says she. Munster continued: "You  
hang up one tide," says she; "the next  
is the big high water. Then you hedge  
your eyes; for it was the first white  
man's house the black had ever seen."

The black stepped down, and an-  
other mounted to take his place. But  
Tagari just before he reached the bot-  
tom step caught sight of Sheldon. It  
was the first time he had ever seen  
him, and he let out a frightened  
screach and dashed madly up the  
steps. At the same moment the great  
mass of blacks surged away panic  
stricken from Sheldon's vicinity. The  
grinning house boys shouted encour-  
agement and explanation, and the  
stampede was checked, the new caught  
head hunters huddling closely to-  
gether and staring dubiously at the fear-  
ful monster.

"Hello!" Joan called out. "What do  
you mean by frightening all my boys?  
Come on up."

"What do you think of them?" she  
asked when they had shaken hands.  
"And what do you think of her?" with  
a wave of the hand toward the Mar-  
tha. "I thought you'd deserted the  
plantation and that I might as well go  
ahead and get the men into barracks.  
Aren't they beautiful? Do you see that  
one with the split nose? He's the only  
man who doesn't hail from the Poon-  
ga-Poonga coast, and they said the  
Poonga-Poonga natives wouldn't  
recruit. Just look at them and con-  
gratulate me. They're men, every last  
one of them. I have such a long story  
I don't know where to begin, and I  
won't begin anyway till we're  
through with this and until you have  
told me that you are not angry with me."

"Ogu, what place belong you?" she  
went on with her catechism.

But Ogu was a bushman, lacking  
knowledge of the almost universal  
beche de mer English, and half a  
dozen of his fellows wrangled to ex-  
plain.

"There are only two or three more,"  
Joan said to Sheldon, "and then we're  
done. But you haven't told me that  
you are not angry."

Sheldon looked into her clear eyes as  
she favored him with a direct, un-  
troubled gaze that threatened, he knew  
from experience, to turn teasingly de-  
fiant on an instant's notice. And as  
he looked at her, it came to him that  
he had never half anticipated the glad-  
ness her return would bring to him.

"I was angry," he said deliberately.  
"I am still angry, very angry"—he  
noted the glint of defiance in her eyes  
and thrilled—"but I forgive, and I  
now forgive all over again. Though I  
still insist—"

"That I should have a guardian,"  
she interrupted. "But that day will  
never come. Thank goodness, I'm of

age and able to transport land  
mass in my own right. And speaking  
of business, how do you like my force  
of American methods?"

"Mr. Raff, from what I hear, doesn't  
take kindly to them," he temporized,  
"and you've certainly got the dry  
bones rattling for many a day. But  
what I want to know is, if other  
American women are as successful in  
business ventures?"

"Luck, 'most all luck," she disclaim-  
ed modestly, though her eyes lighted  
with sudden pleasure, and he knew  
her boy's vanity had been touched by  
his tribute of tempered praise.

"Luck be blown!" broke out the  
long mate, Sparrowhawk, his face  
shining with admiration. "It was hard  
work, that's what it was. We earned  
our pay. She worked us till we drop-  
ped, and we were down with fever  
half the time. So was she, for that  
matter, only she wouldn't stay down,  
and she wouldn't let us stay down.  
My word, she's a slave driver. An'  
the Lord lumme, the way she made  
love to old Kina-Kina!"

"He was older than Telepasso and  
dirtier," she assured Sheldon, "and I  
am sure much wicked. Now I must  
run and wash up. Did the Sydney or-  
ders arrive?"

"Yours are in your quarters," Shel-  
don said. "Hurry, for breakfast is  
waiting. Let me have your hat and  
belt. Do, please, allow me. I know  
you only one book for them, and I there  
where it is."

She gave him a quick scrutiny that  
was almost wordless, then sighed  
with relief as she unbuckled the heavy  
belt and passed it to him.

"I doubt if I ever want to see an-  
other revolver," she complained. "That  
one has worn a hole in me, I'm sure.  
I never dreamed I could get so weary  
of one."

Sheldon watched her to the foot of  
the steps, where she turned and called  
back:

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to be home again!"

"And Burnett said, 'Well, I'll be  
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belt. Do, please, allow me. I know  
you only one book for them, and I there  
where it is."

empty. "But there is against starving  
'em," I said. "You know there ain't any  
kai-kai to speak of aboard of us and  
there ain't a crumb on the Martha."

"Don't let the kai-kai worry you,"  
Captain Munster says she. "If I can  
find grub for eighty-four mouths on  
the Martha, the two of you can do as  
much by your two vessels. Now go  
ahead and get around before a steady  
breeze comes up and spoils the ma-  
neuver. I'll send my boats the mo-  
ment you strike."

"And we went and did it," Sparrow-  
hawk said solemnly and then emit-  
ted a series of chuckling noises. "Miss  
Lackland transferred the recruits, and  
the trick was done."

CHAPTER XVII.  
AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE.

"BUT where was she during the  
northwester?" Sheldon asked.  
"At Langa-Langa. Ran up  
there as it was coming on  
and laid there the whole week and  
traded for grub with the niggers.  
When we got to Tulagi there she was  
waiting for us and scolding with  
Burnett. I tell you, Mr. Sheldon, she's  
a wonder, that girl, a perfect won-  
der."

Munster refilled his glass, and while  
Sheldon glanced across at Joan's  
house, anxious for her coming, Spar-  
rowhawk took up the tale.

"Gritty! She's the grittiest thing,  
man or woman, that ever blew into  
the Solomons. You should have seen  
Poonga-Poonga the morning we arriv-  
ed—Sadders papping on the beach and  
in the bush and signal smokes rising  
everywhere. 'It's all up,' says Cap-  
tain Munster. 'Up your grumpy,' she  
says to him. Sparrowhawk went on:  
"Why, we haven't arrived yet, much  
less got started. Wait till the an-  
chor's down before you get afraid."

"That's what she said to me," Mun-  
ster proclaimed. "And of course it  
made me mad, so that I didn't care  
what happened. We tried to send a  
boat ashore for a powder, but it was  
fired upon. 'What we want,' says  
Miss Lackland, 'is a hostage. I'm  
going ashore tonight to fetch Kina-Kina  
himself on board, and I'm not asking  
who's game to go with me, for I've  
got every man's work arranged for  
him. I'm taking my sailors with me  
and one white man.' Of course I'm  
that white man," I said, for by that  
time I was mad. Of course you're  
not, says she. 'You'll have charge of  
the covering boat. Curtis stands by  
the landing boat. Fowler goes with  
me. Brahm's takes charge of the Flib-  
berty and Sparrowhawk of the Emily.  
And we start at 1 o'clock.'"

"My word, it was a tough job lying  
there in the covering boat. I never  
thought doing nothing could be such  
hard work. We stopped about fifty  
fathoms off and watched the other  
boat go in."

"Of course there was a row. It had  
to come, and I knew it, but it startled  
me just the same. I never heard such  
screaming and yelling in my life. The  
niggers must have just dived for the  
beach without looking to see what was  
up, while her Tahitians let loose, shoot-  
ing in the air and yelling to hurry 'em  
on. And then I heard them coming  
through the mangroves and an our  
strike on a gunwale and Miss Lack-  
land laugh, and I knew everything  
was all right. We pulled on board  
without a shot being fired. And there  
was old Kina-Kina himself, being  
hoisted over the rail, shivering and  
chattering like an ape. The rest was  
easy. Kina-Kina's word was law, and  
he was scared to death. And we  
kept him on board issuing proclama-  
tions all the time we were in Poon-  
ga-Poonga."

"It was a good move, too, in other  
ways. She made Kina-Kina order his  
people to return all the gear they'd  
stripped from the Martha. She—here  
she comes now."

It was with a shock of surprise that  
Sheldon greeted her appearance. The  
ready made clothes from Sydney had  
transformed her. A simple skirt and  
shirt waist of some sort of wash goods  
set off her trim figure with a hint of  
elegant womanhood that was new to  
him. Brown slippers peeped out as  
she crossed the compound, and he  
once caught a glimpse to the ankle of  
brown openwork stockings. Some-  
how she had been made many times  
the woman by these mere extraneous  
trappings.

"I've opened up a new field," she  
said as she began pouring the coffee.  
"Old Kina-Kina will never forget me,  
I'm sure, and I can recruit there when-  
ever I want. I saw Morgan at Guvutu.  
He's willing to contract for a thousand  
boys at 40 shillings per head. Did I  
tell you that I'd taken out a recruiting  
license for the Martha? I did, and the  
Martha can sign eighty boys every  
trip."

Sheldon smiled a trifle bitterly to  
himself. The wonderful woman who  
had tripped across the compound in  
her Sydney clothes was gone, and he  
was listening to the boy come back  
again.

"Well," Joan said, with a sigh, "I've  
shown you hustling American meth-  
ods that succeed and get somewhere,  
and here you are beginning your mud-  
ding again."

Joan stood beside Sheldon and sigh-  
ed as she watched the Martha beating  
out to sea, old Kina-Kina, brought over  
from Savo, in command.

"My, but she is a witch! Look at  
her eating up the water, and there's no  
wind to speak of. Honestly, if I'd  
dreamed of the chance waiting for me  
at Guvutu when I bought her for less  
than \$300 I'd never have gone partners  
with you. And in that case I'd be sail-  
ing her right now."

The justice of her contention came  
abruptly home to Sheldon.

"You make me feel like a big man  
who has robbed a small child of a lot

by," he said, with sudden contrition.  
"And the small child is crying for it."

She looked at him, and he noted that  
her lip was slightly trembling and that  
her eyes were moist.

"But the small child won't cry any  
more for it," she was saying. "This  
is the last sob. But some day I'm go-  
ing to sail the Martha again. I know  
it. I know it."

In reply, and quite without premed-  
itation, his hand went out to hers,  
covering it as it lay on the railing.  
But he knew beyond the shadow of a  
doubt that it was the boy that return-  
ed the pressure he gave, the boy sor-  
rowing over the lost toy. The thought  
enthralled him.

"Never mind," he said. "You can  
go sailing on the Martha any time you  
please—recruiting on Malaita if you  
want to."

It was a great concession he was  
making, and he felt that he did it  
against his better judgment. Her re-  
ception of it was a surprise to him.

"With old Kina-Kina in command?"  
she queried. "No, thank you. He'd  
drive me to suicide. I couldn't stand  
his handling of her. I'll never step  
on the Martha again unless it is to  
take charge of her. I'm a sailor, like  
my father, and he could never bear  
to see a vessel mishandled."

An hour later, just as they were  
riding out of the compound, Sheldon  
glanced at her sharply and noted her  
face mottling, even as he looked, and  
turning orange and green.

"It's the fever," she said. "I'll have  
to turn back."

By the time they were in the com-  
pound she was shivering and shaking,  
and he had to help her from her horse.

"Funny, isn't it?" she said, with  
chattering teeth. "Like senility—  
not serious, but horribly miserable  
while it lasts. I'm going to bed. Send  
Noa Noa and Vlaburi to me. Tell  
Ondri to make hot water. I'll be out  
of my head in fifteen minutes. But  
I'll be all right by evening. Short and  
sharp is the way it takes me."

Sheldon obeyed her instructions,  
rushed hot water bottles along to her  
and then sat on the veranda gazing  
across the compound to the grass  
house. Yes, he decided, the contention  
of every white man in the islands was  
right—the Solomons was no place for  
a woman.

He clasped his hands and Lalaperu  
came running.

"Here, you," he ordered: "go along  
barracks, bring 'm black fella Mary,  
plenty too much, altogether."

A few minutes later the dozen black  
women of Beranda were ranged before  
him. He looked them over critically,  
finally selecting one that was young,  
comely as such creatures went, and  
whose body bore no signs of skin dis-  
ease.

"What name, you," he demanded.  
"Snaguli."

"Me Mahua," was the answer.  
"All right, you fella Mahua. You  
finish cook along boys. You stop along  
white Mary. All the time you stop  
along, you survive?"

"Me survive," she grunted and obeyed  
his gesture to go to the grass house  
immediately.

"What name?" he asked Vlaburi,  
who had just come out of the grass  
house.

"Big fella sick," was the answer.  
"White fella Mary talk 'm too much  
allie time. Allie time talk 'm big fel-  
la schooner."

Sheldon nodded. He understood. It  
was the loss of the Martha that had  
brought on the fever. He lit a cigar,  
and in the curling smoke of it  
caught visions of his English moth-  
er and wondered if she would under-  
stand how her son could love a wo-  
man who cried because she could not  
be the skipper of a schooner in the